



California Connected by 25 Initiative

A partnership of the Annie E. Casey Foundation Family to Family Initiative
Charles and Helen. Schwab Foundation * Walter S. Johnson Foundation
Stuart Foundation * William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Initiative in Brief

Background

The Family to Family (F2F) Initiative was developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 1992 to address the growing challenges in the nation's child welfare system. As a child welfare and foster care reform initiative, its guiding principles, values and core strategies are designed to help state and local child welfare agencies improve outcomes for children and families. Eighteen states in the nation have implemented the Family to Family Initiative. Within California, twenty-four counties representing almost ninety percent of the children in foster care have implemented this Initiative.

The California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) is a youth transitions reform initiative which is part of California's Family to Family Initiative. The purpose of CC25I is to develop a comprehensive continuum of services supporting positive youth development and successful foster youth transition to adulthood. CC25I is part of the national Connected by 25 Initiative established by the Youth Transition Funders Group (www.ytfg.org), a network of grant makers whose mission is to help vulnerable youth connect by age 25 to the opportunities, experiences and support systems that will enable them to succeed throughout adulthood. CC25I was launched in 2005 through the collaborative efforts of the following philanthropic organizations:

- Annie E. Casey Foundation Family to Family Initiative (www.aecf.org)
- Walter S. Johnson Foundation (www.wsjf.org)
- Stuart Foundation (www.stuartfoundation.org)
- The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (www.hewlett.org)
- Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation (www.schwabfoundation.org)

Their partnership, commitment and co-investment in this Initiative is strengthening youth transitions policy and practice and developing tools for data collection, outcome measurement and self-evaluation.

Overview

There are five participating CC25I counties in California: Alameda, Fresno, San Francisco, Santa Clara and Stanislaus. Each is building upon the Family to Family and Youth Transitions and Permanency work they have already accomplished. CC25I counties receive up to \$480,000 in grant assistance over three years to implement plans developed as a result of a self-assessment process and technical assistance. The initiative targets youth ages 14 to 24 years. Each county plan contains a set of locally designed core strategies for building and expanding key partnerships, effecting systems change or integration, and implementing new and improved services in key focus areas: K-12 Education; Post-secondary Education and Training; Housing; Employment and Career; Financial

Literacy and Competency, Personal/Social Asset Development; and Permanence. In addition, counties are helping to develop the framework for a California Family to Family foster youth transitions strategy with guiding principles, values, key elements, tools and technical assistance. The goal is to develop a framework that can be utilized in the future by other California counties interested in expanding their Family to Family work to youth who have transitioned out of foster care. Key benchmarks and systems change indicators important to this work include:

1. Partnerships with schools, families and the community to improve educational advocacy, resources and outcomes for foster youth.
2. Partnerships with local workforce investment boards, businesses, institutions of higher education, and community partners to create sector specific training and career pathways that link older foster youth with jobs in growing industries.
3. Partnerships with foster youth, resource families, communities, and public and private housing providers to expand supportive housing options for foster youth.
4. Partnerships, services and systems that promote financial literacy skills, financial competency, and youth savings and asset accumulation.
5. Partnerships, services and systems that promote the physical, psychological, emotional and social development of youth, building personal and social assets and resiliency.
6. Identifying, developing and maintaining lifelong committed relationships for foster youth with significant adults who fulfill a role as a positive mentor, parent or emotional supporter of the youth.
7. Partnerships, services and systems that empower families, youth, foster parents, group homes, foster family agencies, kinship families, guardians, and agency staff to meet the needs of emancipating foster youth?
8. Independent Living Program (ILP) services that are accessible to all foster youth and that are integrated within all levels of the child welfare agency.

Self Evaluation & Systems Change Assessment

CC25I partnering nonprofit foundations have allocated significant resources to develop county capacity to measure client level outcomes for emancipating foster youth. Through the efforts of the University of California at Berkeley, Center for Social Services Research, tools and technical assistance are being provided to build county capacity for self-evaluation. The foundation collaborative is also funding a systems change assessment by the University of California at Berkeley, Richard and Rhoda Goldman School of Public Policy. At the end of three years, CC25I counties will have data and outcomes with which to identify the strategies that were most successful in helping emancipating foster youth transition. A set of key lessons learned in developing and implementing the Initiative will also be available in the areas of interagency collaboration, community support, infrastructure development, technical assistance, and youth and caregiver engagement.

Technical Assistance

Consistent with the F2F model, CC25I counties receive extensive technical assistance in developing and implementing strategies. The Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice at the Center for Human Services at UC Davis provides TA through a wide range of consultants and experts. In addition, state and national convenings are held providing important forums for CC25I sites to come together to share successes and challenges. CC25I has partnered with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (www.jimcaseyyouth.org) and their work together is developing financial literacy, competency, asset development, and individual development account strategies for CC25I.



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